

# News Release

## **Daphne Ecological Services Field Office**

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November 29, 2006 |

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Publishes Final Environmental Impact Statement for Condominium Projects**

(Daphne, Ala.) – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today published in the *Federal Register* a Notice of Availability for its final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Beach Club West and Gulf Highlands condominium projects on the Fort Morgan Peninsula of Baldwin County, Alabama.

The final EIS was prepared by the Service to consider possible reaffirmation of the Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) issued to the developers of the two condominium projects in April 2002, and to assure that National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements to assess the significance of the proposed project on environmental factors have been fully met.

At the time the ITPs were originally issued, the Service prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the two projects. Following issuance of the ITPs, a lawsuit was filed challenging the decision and, with guidance from the court, the Service decided that preparation of an EIS was appropriate.

The final EIS takes into account conclusions drawn from an analysis of the cumulative impacts of all development on the Fort Morgan Peninsula in making its recommendations specific to the two condominium complexes. The final EIS was prepared after a careful review and consideration of all comments received during the public comment period.

Under the Endangered Species Act, an Incidental Take Permit may be issued if, after an opportunity for public comment, it is determined that: any taking of a threatened or endangered species will be incidental; the applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of such taking; the applicant will ensure that adequate funding for the habitat conservation plan will be provided; and the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild. These are the issuance criteria used by the Service.

Following publication of the final Environmental Impact Statement, the Service will complete documentation related to the applicants' requests for Incidental Take Permits and prepare a Record of Decision (ROD) regarding the permits. The ROD will be signed no sooner than 30 days following

publication of today's Notice of Availability of the FEIS in the *Federal Register*.

You can request a copy of the final EIS by phone at 404-679-4144, by fax at 404-679-7081, by e-mail at [aaron\\_valenta@fws.gov](mailto:aaron_valenta@fws.gov), or by mail at: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Southeastern Regional Office, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30345.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.